PAVITRANANDA MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF RELIGION IGNCA

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Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee

With best wishes

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4.1.1948

MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF RELIGION

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IN
SEARCH OF RELIGION

By
SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

Published by
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"So, says the Vedanta, religion is to be realised now. And for you to become religious means that you will start without any religion, work your way up and realise things, see things for yourself; and when you have done that, then, and then alone, you have religion. Before that you are no better than atheists, or worse, because the atheist is sincere; he stands up and says, 'I do not know about these things,' while those others do not know but go about the world saying, 'We are very religious people.'"

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

PREFACE

It has been said that the history of man is one long search for God. But will modern man believe this? There is an open crusade, as it were, against God and religion in many quarters. Most people are not, however, really anti-religious and anti-God: they are only against the present use of the words "God" and "Religion." In other words, they cannot subscribe to the conception of God as presented by theologians or have faith in the form of religion as practised by the Pharisees in every country.

All prophets, representing the highest level to which humanity can evolve, invariably say that man is the image of God, that he is essentially a spiritual being. If that be so—and there can be no doubt about that—man cannot eternally remain forgetful of his spiritual nature. One day he will surely find out

his Self. But modern man is a victim of various conflicting forces which stand in the way of his discovering himself. In the following pages are discussed some of the problems which obscure or tend to obscure the spiritual vision of man in the present age, and the possibility, if any, of his transcending them.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS
September 7, 1947

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Modern Man in Search of Religion

Chapter One

HAS THE WORLD GROWN IRRELIGIOUS ?

"Has the world grown irreligious ?" If we put this question to persons who are interested in religion, the immediate answer will be in the affirmative. They will say, "The world is growing increasingly irreligious from day to day, and presents the worst possible spectacle of the lack of religious spirit." Yes, if one looks at the situation to-day, one is in despair as regards where the world is drifting to. After the inhuman and inconceivable savagery perpetrated during the recent war, with the atomic bomb hanging like the sword of Damocles over the destiny of man, who will dare to say that the world is not drifting away from the path of righteousness ? And every war brings about great revolutions in morals and ethical conduct. Time-

honoured customs are challenged and flouted with bravado, and a reckless spirit of defiance of everything holy and sacred becomes the order of the day. Many soldiers demobilized and relieved from active service hardly fit in with the old society, and they shockingly disturb the equilibrium of the community in which they were once co-ordinating members. It is so very true that the problems of peace are far more difficult to tackle than the problems of war. A war is waged at a tremendous cost in men and money, it involves the greatest amount of sacrifice on the part of all concerned, but with what results ? Men find that there is no peace even when the war is over, that the happiness which they longed for has turned into an illusion.

Then, looking at the inside working of the orthodox religions, we find that their condition is hopeless. Attendance in churches is very, very poor, and is daily deteriorating. The Church Fathers

have to devise means by way of music and other attractions to draw the people. They cry themselves hoarse to impress on the people that Christ died on the Cross to save humanity. But humanity is not anxious to save itself, so they cry in the wilderness. Similar is the case with other religions. In India no one with modern education is anxious to follow the direction of orthodox religion. He does not care to worship in temples and is critical about the utility of doing so. If he visits a temple, he is more concerned about its history and architecture than about its devotional influence. At best his love for temples is the result of a reflex action. Because some arrogant foreigners decry temple-worship, he must defend it from a sense of national self-respect. The same thing is happening in China. Those who are in touch with the current thoughts of the modern world do not care for their ancient culture or way of life.

There is an open crusade against religion all over the world. Some people talk vigorously against the utility of religion—nay, of the disservice that religion has done to humanity. And it seems that their following is rapidly on the increase. Against this surging wave of criticism, orthodox people find their voice ineffective. They find themselves misfits in the modern world. They feel that they have become anachronisms.

When one observes this sad spectacle, one naturally asks with a heavy sigh, "Where is the world drifting to? What is in store for humanity if things go on in this way?" One feels that the world has certainly become irreligious and the situation is growing worse from day to day.

But if one takes a long-range view of the past, one may ask, "When was the world better?" The past may have a glamour, but it is only because we cannot see it from close quarters. The moon

looks so beautiful from a distance, but if we could go near it, it might prove to be ugly. It is a characteristic of human nature ever to be discontented with the present. Whatever cannot be seen seems beautiful to it. So man always sighs for things gone by, and looks eagerly for things that are coming in the future. But when the future becomes the present, it at once loses all its charm. It is said that there is joy in striving for something, but as soon as it is attained, one is no longer enamoured of it. So man is always unhappy, discontented, and dissatisfied. Ask any man in any circumstances; from his answers you will find he is unhappy, if not miserable, he has his own cross to bear, which he would avoid if he could.

If you read the ancient scriptures of any religion, you find the same story repeated everywhere: "The world having fallen away from the path of religion, the necessity arose for a prophet

to be born. He was born to save humanity, a number of people followed him, worshipped him and saw in him God on earth." But humanity was not saved, it followed its own paths, it went blundering on and committing more and more mistakes till there came another prophet who gave birth to another religion. And there was a fight between one religion and another, each claiming unrivalled authority over the conscience of mankind. This is true not only of the prehistoric age but also of those eras of which there is an accurate record of events. Look at the happenings of the medieval age in Europe. What inhuman cruelty was done by the Inquisition. Thousands of persons—men, women, and children were burnt to death, and that in the name of religion. Who were more irreligious ? Those who were persecuted or those who did the persecution ? Things were basically the same even after the Inquisition. When

the discoveries of science began to pull down ancient beliefs and theories which had been preached and supported by religion, there was a great hue and cry: religion is in danger. Only the religious authorities were not then powerful enough to persecute those who had the temerity to challenge them.

In India if you read the ancient epics and Puranas, you will find that, side by side with ideal characters who are beautiful enough to shed lustre of glory on humanity itself, there were despicable figures who could outstrip all modern villains. This indicates that even in that enchanting past evil existed side by side with good, that there were saints as well as sinners,—things were not all right nor were they all wrong. If you follow the course of Indian history from the remote past, at every age you will find people complaining that the destiny of humanity is hanging in the balance. Buddha found the religious life

of his time burdened with rituals and ceremonials, some of which involved great cruelties to animals. Orthodox Hindus were, of course, against Buddha and Buddhism. But the message of Buddha carried everything before it by the sheer force of its strength and weight. But what doubt is there that those who were opposed to it, complained of the great harm it was causing or was likely to cause to the country? Then there came the time when Buddhism degenerated and Hinduism got the upper hand. Buddhists at that time perhaps levelled the same charge against the Hindu revivalists. And so on. Look at the condition of India—say, one hundred years back. What was the situation? The English people came, conquered the land, and brought about a revolution in the social, moral, and cultural outlook of the people. And with them came Christianity, which made great inroads on the citadel of Hinduism. The

majority of the people who received English education openly defied Hindu customs and manners, orthodox ideas and sentiments, and became renegades to their inherited ideals. If one studies the inner working of orthodox society at that time, one finds that things were not all well there. Child marriage of ridiculous types—with its concomitant evils, child-widows—polygamy on a revoltingly large scale, the loose morals of a stagnant society, could be found side by side with the rigidity of a section of people clinging to higher ideals. So it cannot be said, unless one is too much of an idealist, that the social condition was all ideal at that time.

This over-critical attitude towards the past does not indicate that we are blind to the evils of the present times, that we are not conscious of the earnest and vigilant care that is necessary to improve the present situation. All that we want to emphasize is that there is not much value

in the saying that things are all wrong at present in comparison with what they were in the past. What happens is this : a generation of people comes to the stage of the world ; they act their parts as best they can, and when their turn comes to leave the stage and they see the coming generation eager to step into their shoes, they become alarmed at the thought that the traditions and standards they have set up will not be respected. So ensues the eternal conflict between the Old and the New. It will be observed that the majority of those who say that the world is going astray, are of the middle age and above. The younger generation will not, as a rule, say that. They are full of dreams and enthusiasm to build up the world on an entirely new foundation. In doing that, they do not mind if all ancient customs and thoughts, however holy and sacred, are swept away. They say :— "To build a new house on a dilapidated construction, it is necessary

to destroy a great deal. Why grieve over it? That would be a sign of weakness." So whom to trust?—dreaming youth looking to the future, or the old folk casting their last, lingering glance behind?

As time marches on, situations change, circumstances differ, and man also acts differently. We cannot judge the actions of a man in the mid-twentieth century by the ideas and ideals which were in vogue in society in the prehistoric age. We cannot think of life at present times in terms of the forest retreats of the Upanishadic period, for the simple reason that forests are so rare nowadays. It is idle to think that we can regulate our present society by the old rigid standard of four castes and four stages of life, because under the stress of modern life they have given up their watertight demarcations. Daily are they tending to become fused together. But we do not deny that the old principles

are there—ever healthy, useful, and beneficial. Old principles will have to be applied to new conditions, and in the process they may lose their colour but not their intrinsic value. But those whose thoughts run only in a fixed rut, get alarmed and say that the world is heading towards destruction. Whether we like it or not, the world is moving, it is not stationary, it has not fallen into stagnation. Life is movement, stagnation indicates death. So there are bound to be changes in the living, moving world. Only the faint-hearted will be scared at that.

The very fact that there is so much criticism of every new form of thought and idea indicates that we are alive, that we are on the way towards progress. Self-examination is a stepping-stone to progress in individual lives. The greater the introspection, the greater is the chance of improvement. We can say that the world is on the right track,

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because every new movement which arises is subjected to merciless analysis, criticism, and scrutiny. It has to grow against tremendous opposition. If it survives, it does so because of sheer merit, utility, and necessity. This may be called a process of world growth through self-analysis and self-criticism.

Do we not find innumerable societies and associations rising in every country, which seek to set right the moral and spiritual disturbances of the people? If churches and temples suffer from lack of attendance, the spiritual hankering of people is pressing for fulfilment in numerous other ways. In the last fifty years alone, we see that so many movements have been started, which are allied to spiritual activities. That shows that in spite of the modern man's much vaunted opposition to religion, he is constitutionally a religious being.

And there are so many false prophets. Every one of them can claim a large

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following. The wonder of wonders is that some of them find easy victims in persons who are the most sceptical, critical, and alert. Poor creatures—who over-confident of their intelligence make abject fools of themselves! Persons who, because of their suspicious natures, see spectres in broad daylight find to their dismay that the daylight has faded for them. But we should not pity them too much. Their sad plight only illustrates the point that we cannot so easily stifle our spiritual hankering. It is constantly pressing for fulfilment. If we do not give it proper scope, it will run into a wrong channel. But that does not mean that the old orthodoxies will have their day again. Old beliefs and faiths must have a new orientation, otherwise they will not be able to satisfy the demands of new hopes and aspirations and keep pace with the new outlook. One of the most influential preachers in America said in his younger days, "I am throwing over

my old idea of the universe. I am building another—and leaving God out." Yet in mature years when he began to preach, his Sunday sermons would be eagerly heard by two to three thousand devout souls. His idea was that the Virgin Birth, the literal inspiration of the Scriptures, and the belief that Christ will return "upon a heap of blazing clouds," will no longer stand. "If people must accept these interpretations or get out," then out of the Christian church would go some of the best Christian life and consecration of this generation. The very fact that churches and similar institutions are in disfavour proves that they do not fulfil modern needs. Good wine needs no bush. If religion has its utility, it need not be advertised. People, of their own necessity, will seek it out from any corner of the earth. It may be that those who talk so much of religion do not know what religion is. They deal with false wares. So they cannot attract

people. As such they need not feel sorry or disappointed.

Are not many people unconsciously religious? Many persons outside the fold of orthodox religions live much better lives than do their brethren who bear the insignia of being religious-minded. A tree should be judged by its fruits. It is not going to church with punctilious regularity or following the rigid routine of religious ceremonies that really constitutes a religious life, but character, purity of heart, the spirit of service, readiness to sacrifice one's all, if need be, for a cause. Judged by this standard can we say that the world altogether lacks such people? Do we not find a number of persons in every country who attract a considerable following because of their exalted characters? They may not pray regularly—at least in public, but what doubt is there that God's grace is on them?

Those who glibly say that the world is

growing irreligious, forget that the power behind the world is not the brick and mortar of churches, or the beauty and grandeur of mosques and temples, but God Himself. His eyes see everything. He knows best how to guide His creation. Behind apparent evils there may be lurking seeds of unseen good.

There are ebbs and flows in the ocean. The moon waxes and wanes. There occur ups and downs in life. The same holds good in regard to the history of humanity. Humanity is on a long march. At times progress may not be clearly visible, at times it may seem that it is on the wrong path, but through mistakes and blunders, it is on the onward march, it is going towards its ultimate goal. To deny this is to deny the existence of God Himself. That is rather the surest indication of irreligion.

Chapter Two

REVERENCE FOR SCIENCE

The first and foremost protest against religion comes from science. Science depends on experiment and observation. It believes in direct experience. A scientist working in his laboratory does not find any direct evidence of God. He sweeps the sky with his telescope and subjects an atom to the minutest scrutiny, but he finds that God is not there. So he confidently and boldly declares God is to be found nowhere : God does not exist at all, belief in the existence of God is a myth, a kind of superstition. And many believe this as a gospel truth, so great is the hold of science on modern minds. Because a scientist has said this, so it cannot be wrong, such is their idea. They forget that a scientist also is after all a human being and, like every other human being, is liable to err. The

generality of mankind does not take account of the fact that many scientific theories, which were once believed to be irrefutable, have now been exploded. Euclid, who ruled the world of mathematics for about two thousand years, has now been challenged, and that successfully : now the belief is that, in addition to Euclidean geometry, other forms of geometry are possible. Newton's laws which were the basis of scientific research in many fields are now found to be inadequate. People working in the fields of science keep an open mind. It is a credit to scientists that no theory is considered sacrosanct by them, no man, however great a genius he may be, is deemed to be free from the frailties of common men. Every man is challenged, not once or twice but constantly and eternally. If he can stand that, then only are his words believed, otherwise not. So his theories are discarded even if they have been believed to be true for

hundreds or thousands of years. But the man in the street does not care to know the inside working of the scientific world. To him everything that passes as a scientific truth is a truth for all times. He stands in awe of science. So when a scientist says a thing, it cannot be wrong, such is his idea. This is the reason why the opinion of science with regard to religion has disturbed the faith of many in God and religion.

Science has practical utility in this very life. Religion talks of benefit in the life beyond death. To many, religious pursuits mean the payment of an insurance premium towards happiness in the life to come. For fear of the unknown, they do some meritorious deeds in the present life. But the result is not perceptible in this world. The part science plays in the service of mankind is not like that ; it is tangible, visible, and the effect is immediate. Daily is science opening up newer and wider vistas for man, and its

services to humanity in the shape of increased material comforts are immense. Science is power. With the help of scientific discoveries man is becoming more and more powerful, so much so that he is bold enough to defy his very Maker. Even when science is utilized for destructive purposes, it is indicative of great power. The atomic bomb has made the whole world terror-stricken. What a great discovery! So much power released from a tiny, invisible atom! Compared with the services of science, the utility of religion for mundane existence pales into insignificance. Why talk of peace and happiness in the world to come, when you cannot solve your pressing problems of the present life? Science offers us great help in solving the difficulties of our daily existence. So science has created great confidence in the mind of man. Even if a theory or two here and there is found to be wrong, it does not matter. What does it matter

if the law of gravitation is found to be inadequate in explaining the movement of heavenly bodies? One can see a distant star, invisible to the naked eye, with the help of a telescope. That is a great wonder. Imagine what was the astonishment of the man who used the first telescope! When a man finds that science can act like Alladin's lamp, why should he care for religion which talks of, or in terms of, supernatural things and experiences?

But there has been too much talk about the relation between science and religion. Why should there be any relation at all between science and religion? The scope of the one is quite different from that of the other. Science and religion run parallel, they may not meet at all. Without having any interest in religion, many put absolute trust in science, it is true; but science and religion are not rival bodies. There can be comparison between two things only when they both

belong to the same category. But when they are entities of two altogether different types, how can there be any comparison between them ?

Science deals with the objects and phenomena of external nature, religion speaks of the inner world of man. Science is busy discovering the marvels of external nature, religion studies the laws of the internal nature of man. How then can one talk of these two in terms of each other ? Science gets the upper hand in the thought of man, because the discoveries of science are tangible and spectacular. The discoveries of religion are to be felt rather than to be demonstrated. They cannot be shown objectively to an audience. But nevertheless the discoveries of religion are as—if not more —true as those of science. From that standpoint, religion also is a science. The fundamental basis of science is that it does not recognize any privileged individual or class. Anybody can experiment

for himself and test the truth discovered by a scientist. Science is no respecter of persons. If a scientist says that the truth he has found is a sealed book to others, he falls into the class of a magician. In that event there is no difference between a scientist and a magician. Science commands so much confidence, because in science everything is above board. There is no secrecy in it. And science is ever ready to undergo any test and examination.

It is the same with *real* religion also. No true prophet says, "I have known the Truth, and you, the rabble, cannot know it." On the other hand, the greatness of a prophet lies in the fact that he brings down the highest Truth to the door of every man. He says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The solicitude of every prophet to share the blessings and benefits of his discoveries with every human being on earth—high

or low, rich or poor, saint or sinner—is wonderful. Indeed the greater the spiritual height a prophet has attained, the more earnest is his sympathy and solicitude for suffering humanity. But no prophet asks us to take anything for granted merely because he believes it to be true. Each one of the prophets says, "Experiment for yourself and you are sure to reach the same conclusion. And then your belief will be firm and your conviction deep-rooted." The only difficulty about spiritual truths is that one has to *feel* them, realize them in one's heart of hearts. One has to *know* for oneself. Spiritual truths are Svasamvedya —to be tested by direct experience. The discoverer alone will know that he has realized them ; others will see only the indirect effect of that discovery on his life and conduct—his unselfish love, unbounded sympathy for one and all, and above all, his power to radiate peace and blessedness on his surroundings.

Spiritual truths are not knowledge in the ordinary sense. They do not come from outside, they evolve from within and transform one's whole life. Religion is being and becoming. But nevertheless the laws of the spiritual life are true and true for all times and for all places. There is no mystery about them. Anybody can test them, provided he is ready to undergo the required discipline. Scientific truths are known through intellect, spiritual truths are realized by dint of inner discipline. They are open to all. Whereas scientific truths are known to have given way even after thousands of years, when new facts were available, no spiritual truth has failed the test of time. The prophets of all ages and lands say the same thing—though couched in different forms and words. Let us take a simple example: "God listens to the earnest prayer of a longing heart." So many prophets have said this same thing. The latest prophet only

repeats the same thing, with new emphasis born of his personal conviction. The man in the street may not have faith in these words, but any person with an open mind who tries this for himself realizes the truth of the statement. Thousands of people from time immemorial have known it and proved it. They may disbelieve anything else, but it would be hard for them to deny this. For they have directly realized this fact. A direct experience can stand against any amount of theories and speculations. The prophets only say, "Follow this particular method and you will be convinced of what we say." The difficulty is that ordinary people want to test the sayings of saints through the power of the intellect. But intellect is no good in this sphere. To know a given thing even in science a particular instrument is necessary. You cannot see a distant star with a microscope, nor can you detect malarial parasites with a surgeon's knife.

Similarly, through the help of intellect, however powerful, you cannot test spiritual truths. For that, inner discipline is what is required. But very few people are ready to fulfil this condition, and thus fail to arrive at correct conclusions.

By no means is it denied that there are cheats and charlatans who masquerade as religious persons ; nor is it ignored that many things which pass as pertaining to religion have no real connection with it : they are at best the outer forms of real religion and fall off automatically as the aspirant grows in spiritual life. What we mean by religion is the body of spiritual truths which have stood the test of time and which are the direct experiences of sincere religious people. There are dishonest persons in every walk of life, but counterfeit coins only indicate that there are genuine ones.

In this respect science has done a great service to the cause of religion. It has mercilessly exposed all sham, hypocrisy

and falsity that had found their way into the field of religion, and it is still doing so. In every religion there are essential things and round about them grow many things which have no direct bearing on religion, nor can they stand philosophical and intellectual scrutiny. They are there just to capture the popular imagination or to lead the illiterate masses. But with the passing of time, non-essential things receive disproportionate importance, and they drive the essential things away to a dark corner. The beauty and strength of Christianity lies in the Sermon on the Mount, and not on the theory of creation, the idea of resurrection, the deification of Jesus as the only Saviour of the world, and so on. The Sermon on the Mount is the glorious legacy to humanity for all eternity. But many Christian theologians are busy spinning their pet theories with reference to Christ's life which estrange many sane people from the churches. Spiritual

or spiritually-minded persons are always an asset to the world. But theologians do more harm than good. In their zeal to protect their religion or glorify their prophets, they raise walls which shut out people who would otherwise have been interested in religion.

With the progress of science, when the pet theories of the Christian theologians were exposed one by one, they got alarmed and raised the cry of religion in danger. The biblical theory of creation out of nothing, in seven days, by the fiat of God, can no longer stand in the face of the discoveries of modern science. Only those who are wilfully blind will stick to these old theories. But even if all these theories are exploded, real Christianity is safe : the message of Jesus will inspire people everywhere in the world irrespective of colour or creed.

It is the same with every other religion. In Hindu mythological lore, there are many things which a modern mind will

find it hard to believe. But that does not detract from the moral beauty of the teachings, suggested by the stories. One may not believe that Ravana had ten heads or twenty arms, that the Monkey-God Hanuman had a tail several miles long, but the characters of Rama and Sita are wonderful. They will bring strength, consolation, and solace to whoever reads the Ramayana with proper attention. In the Vedas themselves there are many things which seem meaningless to modern minds. But who will deny that the spiritual message of the Vedas is superb ? In the Vedas one finds mention of the supreme spiritual height it is possible for a mortal being to attain. But theologians will not agree to this. They fuss about every non-essential, till they find that the real soul of religion has disappeared. Nor can it be said that a prophet, though belonging to a very high spiritual place, knows every detail of material existence. Christ might

know full well that the will of the Lord is fulfilled in the world. But does that mean that he knew every detail of how the world came into being, how the planets move round their stars, what mysteries are inside that small invisible thing—a molecule or an atom ? People make confusion about these things. They are unwilling to put any limit to the knowledge of the saints they adore or the prophets they worship. And so they suffer, or, in the long run, become disillusioned. A devoted disciple of a great prophet once said with reference to her Teacher, "When spiritual things are concerned I bow down to him and implicitly obey, but when I am to make any decision with regard to a worldly thing, I use my own common sense." That is a very wise and sane view. Don't drag down a spiritual teacher to a plane which is not his, and thus make him a plaything.

Besides directly exposing many false

theories of the theological world, science has given another great boon to humanity. It has given what is called the scientific outlook. This means that you experiment for yourself and test the truth of any statement. Don't take anything for granted because this or that great man says so. But exercise your own judgment and intellect, and find out if it is true. It is true that intellect has no place in the spiritual plane, intellect does not take one very far. But the above attitude saves one from many dangers and pitfalls and from the hands of cheats and charlatans or religious fanatics. It strengthens one's moral muscles, sharpens one's spiritual appetite—and what is more strange, it even increases one's devotion to God. There is the idea in the religious world that intellect is no good in the spiritual life. For progress in the field of religion one must have faith, devotion and self-surrender. Indeed, this is true of a person who has a firm foothold in the

spiritual life. But before that, if one abandons the guidance of intellect, one's life becomes like a ship without a rudder. Science gives a grave warning in this respect and has even succeeded in keeping many persons from the pitfalls of pseudo-religion.

Before science had sufficiently developed or become aggressive and self-assertive, religion was the master of the field where science has now entered. In the early days people in almost every land believed that devils caused diseases and priests cured them. In times of illness men would depend more on supernatural resources than on any earthly thing. But gradually the science of medicine began to develop. Nowadays most men will go to doctors rather than to the church fathers when taken ill. We say " most men " because even now there are found persons who believe in the efficacy of sorcery, exorcism, or incantation as a remedy against disease and ill-

ness and physical suffering. There are some pseudo-religious schemes such as mind-cure, thought-cure, Christian Science, about which it is difficult to say whether they are religions or sciences. At best, they are the relics of the attitude which depended on supernatural remedies rather than on human intelligence and efforts. Of course there are bold and strong persons even in the field of religion who strongly disapprove of turning spiritual power to secular ends. They will apply spiritual remedy for spiritual purposes, and secular means for achieving secular ends. Why pray to God (and disturb Him!) for curing your illness when a simple dose of medicine can cure you? No doubt these are the boldest and sanest amongst religious persons. Many persons will succumb to human weakness when suffering for a long time or faced with a situation beyond the reach of human efforts. But the effect of this attitude on the stability

of religion is not very happy. When a person in the twentieth century finds that his forefathers depended on priests for things which he himself can now easily cure, his faith in religion is rudely shaken.

The same thing may be said of astronomy. Before astronomy was sufficiently developed, astronomy and astrology were mixed up, and priests would sometimes be the reputed authority on both, dealing out remedies against the human ills of life. It is said that astronomy began in Egypt and Babylon to aid agriculture. But soon the wonderful discoveries of this science captivated the minds of the masses, and so-called religious people turned them to their own advantage to preach religion. But in this matter not only were religious persons guilty, but scientists also succumbed to the influence of the time. Even a great scientist like Kepler used his astronomic-

al knowledge to make astrological predictions.

Nowadays science has almost fixed the boundary of religion. Barring exceptional cases people know what is what. They do not mix up things religious and secular. That has stopped many from turning religious things to secular advantage.

Not only that. One may say that science can directly help the growth of religion. For the modern discoveries of science have deepened the mysteries of the universe. Religion is said to begin from a sense of awe with regard to the external universe. If that is true, then science is unravelling greater and greater mysteries of external nature. The atom bomb may be the cause of devilish destruction but imagine what a great discovery it is—that so much power and energy are embedded in an atom! Modern science says that the universe is so vast, that our great solar system is a

tiny speck in comparison with it. And the universe is constantly expanding—with a speed that is bewildering: it is said that the radius of space is increasing faster than the velocity of light and this rate of expansion is also on the increase. To come to concrete instances: the farthest stellar bodies that can be observed with our present instruments are from us at a distance of one hundred million light years. That is to say, light, travelling at a speed of 186,000 miles a second, will take over one hundred million years to reach them. There are "island universes" whose distances apart will be something like two million light years. And what is the place of man in this infinitely vast universe? It is said that a man's physical dimension is half-way between that of an atom and a star. A star is no bigger than an atom in comparison with the vastness of the universe. And such an insignificantly small creature, man—how can he

feel proud and self-conceited ? If he pictures the vast universe and thinks of his own small dimension, he becomes humble and awe-struck, and naturally looks for the Maker of this creation. The primitive mind would be moved by the sight of such wonderful phenomena as the sun moving round the earth day after day, the moon waxing and waning till it goes out of sight and again coming in full size ; and he would bow down to some unknown deity in great adoration. Modern science has indeed robbed these phenomena of their poetry and mystery which revealed themselves to men in ancient times, but what doubt is there that science has opened up a vaster field of wonders ? Just think of an atom. A vast solar system is, as it were, hidden within the bosom of an atom. Within an atom is a vast empty space. The diameter of an electron is about one-fifty-thousandth part of the diameter of the whole atom. Within the vast space of

an atom the electron moves round a nucleus—like a planet moving round a star in the sky—several thousand million million times a second. To read these things is like reading a fairy-tale. But when one knows that these are facts which have been severely tested and found correct, one feels dizzy ; from scientific facts one steps into the portals of religion. For then one longs to know the Being who is the creator of all these mysteries.

It is idle to think that science stands in the way of religion. Real science will never obstruct the progress of religion. Even if, instead of antagonizing religion as is commonly supposed, science could prove the existence of God through experiments in a laboratory with the help of test-tubes and Bunsen burners, would many people turn to God ? Certainly not. For the pursuit of God is the result of a different urge. When man has got rid of his selfishness, has really felt the ephemeral nature of existence, then only

does he long for the Infinite. Until that feeling comes man will be busy with his everyday common interests. No prophet, no saint, from time immemorial down to the present day, turned to religion on having first got proof of God from a scientist or even a philosopher. Led by their inner urge, they pursued their thoughts about the Infinite beyond the finite, about the Unknown behind the known world, till one day they came face to face with Reality. And then they spoke to wondering mankind of the things beyond the reach of ordinary human thought. That is the genesis of religion. As such religion will not depend on science, nor can science stifle the religious longing of the human race.

At present, science is busy discovering the laws of external nature while religion seeks the truths of the inner world. Naturally they seem to be going in altogether opposite directions. But in comparison with Eternity the human race

is still in its infancy. Who knows, in some distant future, science will reach its ultimate goal, and while comparing its findings with those of religion, it will see that there exist no two separate entities as external and internal worlds. There is but one world—the world of thought. Whose thought is it? Well, it is not thought even. It is the dream of that great Dreamer who weaves His dream, and delights in looking at it.

Chapter Three

THE GOAL OF POLITICS

Politics is another branch of activity which is said to be greatly antagonistic to religion. Discussions often arise regarding the relation between religion and politics. At present religion and politics are suspicious of each other. Religion charges politics with misdirecting people, nations, and humanity ; and politics openly, and sometimes ruthlessly, avows that religion has become an anachronism, an uncomfortable burden on human society. Politics, wielding great material power, now and then attempts to stifle religion altogether.

Such was not the case in ancient times and even some centuries back. In India we hear of Rishis guiding kings and princes with advice. The king would wield temporal power, but behind him was a sage or a seer who was the moral

and spiritual force to prevent him from going astray. As such the guiding principle and ultimate motive of statecraft was how to make the subjects better spiritually and morally in addition, of course, to making them happier materially. There were wars, but they were righteous wars. And even in the course of these wars, some fundamental moral principles were obeyed, honoured, and respected. There was the battle of Kurukshetra causing huge bloodshed, but the compensating factor was that it gave to the world the immortal message of the Gita. The battle of Kurukshetra meant the fight between religion and irreligion, righteousness and aberration from the rightful path, between moral principles and the baser instincts hidden in the human heart—showing that ultimately right triumphs over wrong.

In historic times we hear of King Ashoka and others who, though seated on royal thrones, were actuated by the

highest moral principles and spiritual thoughts. At the present time there are many who will laugh at the very idea of the possibility of such things : according to them Ashoka was a dreamer, a visionary, an idealist, he was the cause of the downfall of India. But look at the result achieved by Ashoka and others of his type. The foreign travellers to India at those times say : Theft was unknown ; people were extremely honest and truthful ; peace and happiness reigned all over the country ; there was no fight between the rulers and the ruled, between the employers and the employed; there was equitable distribution of wealth, and capitalism had not raised its head. And compare the present state of affairs with that. Which is better ?

If we study European history, we find a similar case. The further back we go, the greater we see the influence of religion on politics.

"For the Greeks, ethics and politics

were two aspects of a single enquiry. It was the business of ethics to prescribe the good life to the individual ; it was the business of politics to determine the nature of the community in which the good life as prescribed by ethics could be lived. The *raison d'etre* of politics, in other words, was to be found in an end beyond itself, an end which was ethical."

With the advent and rise of Christianity, till the Reformation, people believed that the purpose of human activity was the realization of the spiritual goal, and, because of that, the policies of the State should be directed to that end. There was a time when the Pope commanded greater influence than a king or an emperor. But gradually there came a tendency towards a split between religion and politics. It is an inherent weakness of average human nature that philosophically it conceives of high moral principles, but in day-to-day life it has a

tremendous struggle against baser instincts. As a result, the average man, more often than not, succumbs to greed, malice, selfishness, and the like. With the development of so-called civilization life began to be more and more complex, and people found it hard to guide at least the collective life by high moral principles. So the split between religion and politics became more and more wide. With the rise of Protestantism, religion became more of an individual affair, a matter of individual conscience rather than of allegiance to an organization. So people could with greater ease separate the function of religion from that of the State. Gradually it came to pass that the State dealt with the material well-being of society and the Church was busy with spiritual needs. In ensuring the material welfare of people, the State did not scruple, if necessary, to lower the moral and spiritual standards. As this tendency developed, everything was considered fair

in politics, till it has now earned the appellation of "a dirty game." It was perhaps Johnson who said that politics is the last refuge of a scoundrel. Nowadays it is taken for granted that even if a good man enters political life, he develops a twofold conscience—a political conscience and an individual conscience. In private life he is a very good man—quite human, kindly, sympathetic, honest, and truthful, but as soon as he sets his hand on political works, he throws all those qualities away, and there is nothing to which he will not stoop in order to achieve his political ends. As a result, when a politician or a statesman talks in terms of idealism, nobody pays serious attention to his words. Everyone knows that they are mere words: they have no greater value than a breath of wind, at any moment a solemn pledge may be most shamelessly broken, and without any notice or warning, a sacred

treaty or pact may be treated as a scrap of paper.

In the matter of conflict between religion and politics, religion is not altogether free from blemishes nor can religious organizations shake off all responsibilities. Religion is the relationship between man and his Maker. If a man really believes in God, he naturally depends on God and God alone and not on any temporal power. When religion falls from this high ideal, religion, or rather a religious organization, looks to the State for help, support, and guidance. "All religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich," writes Bernard Shaw. Naturally a religious organization that depends on the State for its support, cannot do or say anything against the interests of the State—even if the vital principles have to be sacrificed. Sometimes the Church is identified with the powers that be or is at best an ally of the State. That is the reason why a

political revolution is accompanied by the destruction of monasteries, pulling down of churches, and so on. When a new power comes to the scene, anything that helped the cause of the old regime is looked upon as anathema. The latest example of how the Church can be an instrument of tyranny to the people was seen in pre-Soviet Russia.

"There is no denying the fact," says a writer who had an intimate knowledge of Soviet Russia, "that at the time of the Revolution and during some years after it there were violent manifestations of the hostility to the Orthodox Church by sections of the Soviet population, but this was not because millions of people were suddenly converted to atheism. This hostility was political or social, not philosophical. Unfortunately the State Church had to a great extent become the bulwark and instrument of a corrupt autocracy and actively obstructed the legitimate aspirations of the Russian

people. In the eyes of the peasants and villagers the priest was an ally of the rapacious Czarist tax-gatherers and of tyrannical police officials." No wonder it was felt that the Church should be destroyed with the Czarist regime.

Sometimes it becomes a part of the State policy to take advantage of the religious feelings of the people. Machiavelli speaks of religion and morals "as an instrument to be used to his advantage by the intelligent ruler." Napoleon I, though a sceptic, would not countenance any anti-Christian or anti-clerical legislation. He knew that, in keeping the people oblivious of their misery and sufferings, religion exerted the greatest degree of influence. "Yes, we must see to it," he said, "that the floors of the churches are open to all, and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb."

In times of war and on occasions which will serve its purpose, the State

encourages or arranges prayers from all churches, as if, all on a sudden, it has become very religious-minded. It is simply a method of rousing mass feelings for or against a particular thing. How religious feelings can be exploited can best be seen in present-day India. The masses are made simply tools in the hands of political demagogues who invoke the aid of religion to serve their nefarious purposes. Ordinary people do not know what will be to their real interest. They simply follow the cry of "religion in danger." Religious feeling is one of the most combustible elements in the life of the masses. One who can sway it possesses great power. So political leaders, themselves having no faith in religion, take advantage of the religious feelings of the people—sometimes with great success.

Another charge against religion is that it makes the people timid, docile, and other-worldly.

"In the old days our people thought that God gave them this fate or that. Now they began to see they could make their own fate," says a Russian of the Soviet Regime. If one always looks for happiness in the world to come, naturally the duties of the present world are neglected. If people are to be kept or made physically virile, mentally alert and vigorous, religion is a great handicap, they say. For religion talks in terms of the spirit and not of the body.

But is this real religion? The man who is useless for this life can never serve any useful purpose in the life to come. The man who cannot solve the problems of this life, can never solve the problems of eternity. The man who fears to face this life can have no hope of success in the life beyond death, for he carries this mind and his present mental attitude wherever he goes. This is a simple truth. So the real meaning and significance of religion should first be

found, before any criticism can be directed against religion. But this is a fact that religion, which asks people to regulate their lives according to the highest moral and spiritual principles, is a great handicap to politicians—at least to modern politicians. For, politics nowadays is synonymous with anything but justice, honesty, truthfulness—things which count most in one's spiritual life. Naturally any honest man will be suspicious of politics or politicians—barring exceptional cases. And politicians also will find it hard to carry with them those who want to live up to an ideal. Not only that. The influence of a good life lived spreads in society. Politicians have to counteract those influences. Thus they are against religion.

But there is no denying the fact that both politics and religion are important factors in human civilization, and we cannot do without either of them. One is the body, the other is the soul, as it

were. A soul without a body has no visible existence, a body without a soul is a lifeless corpse. Both are interdependent. Even to progress in one's spiritual life, one has to take care of the body. The body, though material, is a great help to spiritual life.

In the same way, there is a great necessity for politics. Politics—not as a "dirty game," but with proper direction—looks after the material needs and comforts of the citizens, and then and then only can they think of higher things. Art, literature, philosophy, religion—these are the fruits of leisure and peace-time activities, which are, in turn, ensured by proper government and able administration. When there is constant disturbance in the country, when the people have to contend with grinding poverty, when they are easy victims of death, disease, and pestilence, no higher thinking is possible. The purpose of politics is to protect the people against these things as well as to

lighten the burden of their struggle for existence. As such, politics should not be looked upon with contempt. Politics, by itself, is not bad, but when misdirected by unscrupulous people, it becomes bad. If there are no police to protect the people against thieves and robbers, if there is no army to guard the country against foreign aggression, one's very life is unsafe. So one should be thankful to those who hold the reins of administration. But, of course, if, sitting at the helm of affairs, they betray the trust, they deserve unequivocal condemnation. This is what is happening nowadays in the political field almost throughout the whole world. So modern politics is generally looked upon with disfavour by the better class of people. Those who are inspired by idealism and actuated by a better sense of justice and equity, are alarmed at the trend of politics in modern times. Politics has become synonymous with commercialism, imperialism, mili-

tarism, and the biological fighting instinct, elbowing out others for one's own enjoyment and domination. These things cannot go on for long. If you fight like animals, you have to die like animals too. If you worship the brute in man, you fall down to the level of brutes. All politicians should remember this.

Here religion comes to the field, and sounds a note of warning. Religion, embodying the spiritual aspirations of the human race, says, "If you want peace and happiness, base your life on high moral and spiritual principles." The greater the greed or avarice, the less the real happiness. By dishonest means and unscrupulous actions you may succeed for the time being, but you must remember that thereby you permanently imperil the cause of personal and national happiness.

But modern politics is not in a mood to listen to this note of warning. So some

dictators want to stifle religion altogether. But is it possible to throttle the religious aspirations of the people ? Churches and religious organizations can be suppressed and destroyed, but individual religious hankerings cannot be stopped. One cannot be made religious by an Act of Parliament, nor can the fiat of a dictator silence the spiritual aspirations of a man's heart. If there is an attempt to suppress religion, as a reaction people will grow more religious. They may not go to Churches, they may not outwardly show any indication of piety, but their religious life will shape itself intensely, till its influence blazes out like a conflagration. Religion is the constitutional necessity of a man. Man becomes religious as a result of his inner urge. Nobody knows how that inner urge comes, so no one can devise any means to suppress it. It is elusive. The more you try to catch it, the more will it fly from you. So those who are alarmed at the thought that

religion will be crushed by political power are victims of false fears. Organizations can be banned, churches, mosques, and temples may be destroyed, but religion cannot be stifled. The houses of God are the outer manifestation of the inner religious life of a people. They, having a visible form, may be done away with, but the inner life of a people remains always untouched; it is immortal.

The question remains, how to reconcile religion and politics? Both are fundamental necessities of life but they seem to have opposite interests, running counter to each other. Politics is not bad, provided it can be chastened and purified. It is the men behind politics who make it good or bad. Politics is an abstract thing. When men put it into practice, it takes a shape. It has been found from experience that no political system is absolutely good or absolutely bad. The degree of the success of a system depends

on the persons at the helm. Monarchy has been successful, it has been a failure too. Democracy has done great good, it has also dashed man's hopes to pieces. The latest fad is communism. It raised high hopes sometime back, now it seems to be gradually changing colours. No political system is evil-proof. With every form of government the crux of the problem is who are the persons who wield real power, and what type of persons they are.

Now, religion will supply the right type of persons to politics. Not those who subscribe to a particular creed or desire to propagate a certain faith, but those who have faith, or are eager to build up their inner life, are the right type. The more serious types of religious persons will not like to join politics. But, then, their influence will silently and automatically spread over society, and society will thus eventually supply better types to politics.

And is there not something common between religion and politics ? Religion says : "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Every religion says that to serve humanity is the best form of worship that one can offer to God. The aim of politics also is to serve people. So this is an identically common formula. But religious people do with a spiritual motive what politicians do with only a humanitarian and altruistic motive. Because religious life means a constant effort for self-discipline, a religious man can naturally stick to his ideal for a longer period than a politician. A politician, though guided by the highest motive in the beginning, very soon succumbs to the exigencies of circumstances, till at last he becomes a bundle of hypocrisy. That is the usual thing, and exceptional cases need not be taken into account. It is, therefore, that, when a politician talks in terms of high idealism, those who are wise pay no heed to his words. Now, if politicians had a spiritual

background, they would turn out better work, they would command greater confidence and, therefore, wider influence. It will often be found that those politicians who have throughout their lives fought constantly for justice and equity, and have upheld the cause of the weak and the oppressed, were in their private lives, highly moral, ethical or spiritual.

Work one has, of necessity, to do. There is no escape from work. A most highly evolved spiritual person or his opposite, a man devoid of thinking power, can remain without work. Between these two classes all people have to work. The Gita says that if you do not work willingly Nature will force you to work. And work done in the right spirit becomes religious—a form of spiritual practice. In this respect, those who want to serve humanity through politics cannot be ignored or set aside. If they also work with a proper attitude

they can raise their actions to a spiritual level.

This is the need of the hour. Let those who want to enter politics do so with spiritual vision, from a high sense of altruism, and let them from day to day watch with self-analysis and introspection, caution and care, that they do not fall away from the path of righteousness. Thus there will be brought about a harmony between religion and politics: politics will be saved from corruption and religion will have a wider vision. It is only in this way that the world can be saved from destruction, and the future of culture and civilization can be assured.

Chapter Four

INTO THE DEPTHS OF MIND

Psycho-analysis is a branch of psychology which has been, of late, exercising a great influence on religion as also on modern thought. Psycho-analysis is the word coined by Freud, but its genesis can be traced to the fact that Joser Breuer of Vienna in the eighties of the last century cured certain patients by an altogether new method—namely by studying the depth of the minds of the patients and applying remedies for the maladies of the mind. Psycho-analysis, as developed by Freud, deals with the inner problem of the mind. According to him deep down within the mind of every individual there lie buried many desires and hankerings. They constantly try to force themselves up to the conscious plane. But as these desires are not of a very good type, man tries to push them down to the lower level of the mind, and thus ensues

a conflict. As a result of this conflict man suffers from various mental as well as bodily ailments. These desires are like "icebergs," a small fraction of which is visible on the conscious plane, the remaining portion lies submerged in the "unconscious." The unconscious is the storehouse of evil thoughts, and this unconscious has a tremendous influence in determining a man's way of life. The unconscious can be ignored for the time being, but not for a long time. It must be faced—the more smoothly it can be done, the better becomes the mental and physical health of a person. Psychoanalysis does not indicate how to control the unconscious, it advocates the necessity of meeting the demands of the unconscious. Now, if the unconscious is a storehouse of evil thoughts, to succumb to them is dangerous. But science, or any branch of knowledge pretending to be scientific, does not recognize anything in terms of good and bad, it simply states

facts. The demands of the unconscious must be met. If one does not meet them, one invites trouble. Man is helpless under the clutches of the unconscious. To try to escape is to go against nature, and no one can disobey nature with impunity.

For a time Freud was the master of the field of psycho-analysis. But afterwards there have been seceders from his school of thought. Alfred Adler, who was unwilling "to stand in the shadow of Freud his whole life," said that the principal urge in man's life was "the will to power," the desire to dominate over others. When a man cannot or does not find enough scope to exercise sufficient power, he suffers : he becomes a sad prey to his own mind. So enough scope should be given to an individual for his self-development or self-expression. Each man should have the maximum amount of freedom for his growth. The greater the freedom, the better for him. It is

said that where Freud has revealed the beast in man, Adler has exposed the devil, and the devil is the dominating urge to power and self-assertion. Dr. C. G. Jung, representing another school of psychology, denies "that the unconscious is a region inhabited by desires which have been repressed after conflict." According to him the principal factor in man's life is "the undifferentiated primal life-force from which all the instincts derive," and "the unconscious arises as a consequence of the individual's one-sided mental growth."

Men are primarily of two types—extrovert and introvert : in the first type feeling is predominant, in the second, thinking plays an important part. "In each case the neglected potentialities tend to become unconscious." Conflicts in life arise when a person, having great emotion, is placed in a situation where emotion can find no play, or when a person endowed with thinking power has to face circumstances

which demand emotion more than thought. And when the conflict is great man suffers from neurosis. In these cases also, a man becomes the victim of his mind—or rather of the "unconscious."

Other schools of psycho-analysis have arisen with some slight differences from one another. A noted writer says that "psycho-analysis, in fact, bids fair to rival Christianity in the number of its sects." In any case it clearly indicates how great an interest the subject has aroused.

The cumulative effect of all this is that the modern man has been led to believe that he is the inescapable victim of the unconscious. Religion and ethics say that you are to control your baser instincts. Unless you can completely subdue them you cannot reach perfection. But psycho-analysis says that that is going against nature: you cannot annihilate your animal impulses, they must extort their legitimate toll of satisfaction. This theory is dangerous. For once you yield

to the cravings of the flesh, you do not know how low you will fall. And you do not see the propriety of the endeavour to control the flesh : for it is a part of nature. One forgets the very simple truth that desires can never be annihilated by feeding them. The more one yields to them, the higher rises the flame of desires, until one is hopelessly lost.

Psycho-analysis talks, no doubt, of sublimation, transference, and so on. But they are only the minimum concessions to the requirements for the preservation of society. If everybody becomes reckless, society cannot go on. There must be some check somewhere. Hence these concessions.

But why should the unconscious be only full of evils—and baser tendencies ? The very fact that man longs to live a life of self-control indicates that this tendency also is a part of his nature. May it not be said that this also comes from the unconscious ? Why does the man who

is morally loose feel remorseful ? Where does his feeling of repentance come from? There is no watertight wall between the unconscious and the conscious. It would be more reasonable to say that both good and evil rise from the depths of the unconscious. Why should one make the unconscious the repository of only the baser impulses ?

And what is the unconscious ? What is its constitution and origin ? How do the tendencies accumulate there ? The best answer to this question is that the unconscious is the repository of the tendencies of the past lives. This presupposes the existence of man's past and future lives. Some desires were satisfied and some longed for satisfaction in one's past life : their impressions were embedded in the mind. As opportunities appear, those impressions take forms and shapes. But then those impressions are both good and bad. So at one time a man becomes full of high hopes and

aspirations and at another time he falls a victim to baser impulses. And by good impulses evil tendencies can be counteracted.

Modern man talks so much of freedom of thought and liberty of action, but, at the same time, he thinks he is the plaything of the unconscious. That is illogical. If man is a complete tool in the hands of the unconscious, there is no hope for him. He is an automaton, a lifeless machine. But man is a living being. He thinks and feels, hopes and aspires. At least he feels that he is the master of his own house. Can any man rest satisfied with the thought, when he goes wrong, that he is a victim of the unconscious? The standard of morality may be lowered further and further, but still there will be something left which a man has to obey. Can he do that? According to the modern theory pushed to its last logical conclusion he cannot. For he has no initiative, he has no free-

dom. This is a hopeless condition, a dismal, gloomy picture of man's life.

One of the reasons why psycho-analysis is so popular is, perhaps, the fact that it approves of man's going after the senses : even while going after them beyond a decent limit, a man can ease his conscience with the thought that, after all, it is a necessary evil. The result is that the standard of morality is rapidly changing. An act which fifty years back a man could not even think of in his mind, he now does openly, and laughs at the prudery of his forefathers. But is man happier, is society healthier for this ? We find that man is becoming more and more restless—with no control over his mind, and no restraint over himself ; he has lost all poise and balance ; he is now, as it were, at the mercy of the four winds ; he lives a hectic life.

Psycho-analysis originated from therapeutic reasons. No doubt this treatment has cured and does cure certain diseases.

But every treatment is efficacious in certain cases and fails in others. So one need not look upon the findings of psycho-analysis as a revelation—as a new gospel. Certainly mind has a great influence over the body but too much attention to the mind sometimes makes the mind diseased. Too much care bestowed on a child spoils his career. Every malady traced to a certain condition of mind gives a wrong suggestion to the patient and makes him see spectres where there are none. Psycho-analysts have cured certain patients no doubt, but misuse of the theories propagated by them have made many healthy persons mentally diseased.

The fact is that psycho-analysts, or rather all modern psychologists, see only a portion of the mind, they have not seen the whole of it, so their conclusions are only partially true. Being themselves part of the mind, they cannot see the whole of it. They study minds with their own

mind, so their conclusions cannot be taken as final.

Indian psychologists have gone beyond mind, so their conclusions are different and much more efficacious. Patanjali (*circa* 200 B.C.), the great seer and psychologist, takes note of the vagaries of mind, but he suggests positive methods as a remedy. The average man, he knows, is the victim of lust, greed, and other passions. But he does not say that in order to be free from them one is to give them free play. He says that by thinking constantly of opposite virtues one can conquer them.

वितर्कबाधने प्रतिपक्षभावनम् ॥

To obstruct thoughts which are inimical, opposite thoughts should be brought in. If you are to cure yourself of anger, just think of love. If you are established in love, even your enemies will fail to make you angry: they will cease to be your enemies any longer.

And, above all, the surest remedy

against all maladies of the mind is to strengthen it through meditation. By meditation the modifications (which are the source of all troubles) of the mind are destroyed. Why does a man suffer ? Because his mind is weak. In order to strengthen the mind, the surest and the only way is to meditate.

Modern psychologists do not know it and so they cannot realize its efficacy. Those who have undergone the practice, are convinced of the result that follows the regular practice of meditation. There are persons who have reached such a state that they are untouched by the vagaries of the mind. They are masters of their minds, and their minds can no longer wield any power over them. Average men are the victims of the tyranny of their own mind. Constantly do they prove cowards to themselves. But a seer has got full control over his mind, just like an expert rider keeping his sturdy steed in check.

Plato said that a man's desires are like horses, each trying to run wild and lead him to a dangerous path. If the man is weak, he runs a great risk of life. But if he is an expert charioteer he controls them and reaches safely the goal of life. In the Upanishads there is exactly the same simile—man's desires compared to wild horses.

Man has three stages of existence. First, there is the animal in man which prompts him to seek pleasure in senses. Some men live in the senses : their only joy is in sense-pleasure. Though human beings in appearance, they are no better than animals or beasts. Then there is a higher class of men. In them has arisen the sense of discrimination between right and wrong, between things which have a deceptive appearance and those which are really good. They reject the bad and try to follow the good. Their life is a life of constant struggle. They try to follow a certain ideal instead of flowing

with the current of desires. They belong, it may be said, to the human plane. The sense of discrimination and the constant effort to follow what is good differentiates them from lower animals. So they may be said to belong to the plane of "Man." And then there are persons who are fortunate enough to have succeeded in their attempt to have full control over themselves—their minds no longer go astray; like a broken horse they follow always the right path. These men may be said to have become divine, though belonging apparently to things earthly. Man's goal in life is to reach this stage of divinity. But unfortunately most of the psycho-analysts emphasize the animal in man. They cannot think of better things, as they themselves have not tasted or had a glimpse of any higher stage. Much depends also on the class of patients with which the psycho-analysts experiment. Dr. C. G. Jung once said that the conclusion of Freud was so be-

cause most of his patients were morally low. He glorified the savage in man, because in his patients he found the animal, unfortunately, too prominent. If he had been able to deal with a better type of patients—those who were morally higher—perhaps his conclusions would have been different. Unfortunately the unwary public have not the power to discriminate so much. They take every conclusion of psycho-analysis as gospel truth. Or, should we say, "You hear what you want to hear"? You believe these things to be true, because they satisfy the hidden morbid desires of your mind.

Behaviourism is another branch of psychology which undermines religious beliefs. One of the theories of Behaviourism is that mind does not exist. What we call thinking is but the sub-vocal speech. Thought is but a bodily process, the result of the movement of the larynx and the brain under a certain stimulus.

"We do not think; we make incipient speech movements. We do not perceive anything; we adjust our eyeballs." If this view is correct man becomes a perfect automaton. Then he is not responsible for any of his wrong actions. He has no freedom of thought, speech, or action. Everything is the result of mechanical, physical movement under a certain stimulus. There is no such thing as sin, nor can a man aspire after or hope for a higher life. Morality loses all its basis. Ethics has no value. Religious beliefs are thus cut at the very root.

Not that a man will surely think, believe, or feel that he is only a bodily machine, even though the theory of Behaviourism is fully proved and firmly established. For man has hopes and fears, the feelings of pleasure and pain, which he cannot so easily get rid of, simply because of a psychological theory. But what is dangerous is that having committed something heinous, a man

will try to shake off the responsibility with the thought that after all it is a mechanical process. He will have the "I-ness" when getting credit for good actions, but he will try to throw off the responsibility, when charged with having committed undesirable deeds. Even though his actions do not come in for public censure, he will lose all zest for regulating his actions. His earnestness for improving himself will slacken, if the theory of Behaviourism takes root in his mind. Religion means a constant endeavour and a ceaseless struggle to live the life of the spirit. But Behaviourism denies that man has any thinking power apart from a bodily process—what to speak of the existence of the spirit ?

These and other tendencies of modern psychology, though mechanistic and deterministic, have this redeeming feature that they indicate the restlessness of modern man to know the real nature of his mind. Modern man has lost faith in

traditional beliefs and institutional religions, but he wants to experience something from within. He has discarded the God in Heaven, but he longs to see the God within himself. He longs for an experience which is vital, unmistakable, and which is scientific.

If we find a class of persons who are up against church-religions or evangelistic faiths, there are millions of persons who swallow new superstitions and go hungry for them. The world is not less superstitious to-day than what it was, say, three hundred years back. But old superstitions have been replaced by new ones. The root cause of all superstitions is that man longs to know the Unknown, to experience what is beyond the boundary of human knowledge. Man doubts whether the world is rational at the foundation. He feels sorry that human reason can explain so few of the things he experiences. And in despair, as a sort of reaction, he succumbs to

things which are opposed to reason. But the fact that man has this restless hankering for new knowledge and experience, indicates that humanity is not doomed, that life has not become stagnant on this plane of existence. All desire for knowledge is a sign of life. So long as there is this desire, there is the hope that at some future time, however distant it may be, the goal will be reached. However dark the night, the dawn must come.

The complexities of modern life have made man's life most miserable. Physically he has many amenities—much larger than what people of even two centuries back had—but mentally his sufferings have increased in an inverse ratio. Man has become more refined and as such more sensitive, and various problems have arisen which were altogether unknown before. This is very clearly reflected in the literature of modern times. Nowadays novels and dramas deal not so much with big characters as with

the mental conflict from which a man suffers. The solutions which the findings of psychology suggest, as we have seen, are worse than the disease. For they create new problems while trying to offer solutions for existing ones. Man in despair does not know where to turn. He visits cinemas, goes to sports, launches into adventures for their own sake, in order to get some respite and relaxation. He feels like a hunted hare within closed walls which in the mad attempt to escape only dashes its head against hard stones.

The situation though dismal has got this hopeful feature, that because the sufferings of man have become very intense, or are becoming greater and greater, he will try all the more earnestly to find a remedy. Solutions found so far, have been disappointing no doubt, but persistent efforts are sure to be fruitful in time.

All great discoveries and inventions have been in fulfilment of some urgent

need. This is true of things spiritual also. Religion originates from pessimistic views about the world and worldly things, but ends in finding a solution which gives a new meaning to everything—even to things mundane. Buddha left the world because he found it full of misery, but his discovery of Truth brought unalloyed happiness to millions of suffering souls.

Why does a man suffer ? What is the root-cause of all misery ?—these are age-old questions. Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, "Led by whom in spite of himself as it were, does a man go wrong and suffer ?" In answer we have got the immortal message embodied in the Gita—an invaluable treasure of humanity. In a much earlier period—in the Upanishads —we find the same question raised. The aspirant asks : "Under whose direction is it that mind goes after its objects, the vital power does its works, the organ of speech utters words ? Who is that being

who moves the eyes to see and the ears to hear ?" Yes, this is a great problem. We feel that we do not lead the mind, but the mind, under the direction of somebody else, leads us. We utter words, which we would not willingly say. We see things which we would otherwise not like to see. We hear things which are not desirable to hear. It is all because we have no control over our senses. Our very senses betray us : there is an enemy hiding in our own house. This is indeed a very tragic situation. So the search began, and the enquiry was pursued till the mystery was unravelled. The Upanishadic seers said: "Which words cannot express but which is the power behind the organ of speech, know that to be Brahman, the real object of your worship. Which the mind cannot grasp, the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, but which makes the mind function, the eyes see, and the

ears hear, that is Brahman, the true object of your worship."

And if one knows Brahman, one becomes blessed and if one does not know Brahman, one suffers.

This is the essence of truth. One has to find out the Immortal behind the vanishing, the Eternal behind the transitory, the Real behind the apparent, That which is beyond thought and speech.

The science of psychology, we mean Western psychology, is still in its infancy. One can reasonably hope that at some future date—may that date be not very, very distant—by pursuing the study of mind, it will end in discovering that which is beyond mind. This pursuit is called religion.

Chapter Five

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

Religion has always been the subject of much controversy. But recently that controversy has become greater. Some say religion is the panacea for all the ills of life. Some say religion serves no useful purpose: it is the opiate of the people, it is a tool in the hands of the higher classes to exploit the masses, to keep them under subjection. Of those persons who ventilate their opinion, a larger number perhaps talk against religion than for it, and there are some who are aggressive in their attitude, desiring to suppress or crush religion altogether. But still religion persists. It is changing colours, taking new forms. It is not dead. It cannot die.

In any controversy one must be very particular about the definition of the terms used. Otherwise no conclusion can

be arrived at. Sometimes two contending parties talk, argue, discuss, and get excited over a thing, but they do not probe deeply into each other's words. The result is that no decisive conclusion is reached. If this is true of other things, it is much more true of religion. Therefore in order to find out whether religion will survive the present onslaught, whether it has proved false to its professions, we must know what is meant by religion.

Each particular religion defines religion in its own way—in terms of its creeds and dogmas. But such a definition represents a partial aspect of religion—if it does that much even; and in the very nature of things it is not real religion. Christianity says one thing about religion, Islam interprets it in another way, Buddhism raises an altogether different note, and Hinduism has its own views about it. The result is that those who have little or no interest in religion are

in great dismay: they want to keep themselves at a safe distance from any religion whatsoever.

There are certain things which are so familiar to us that it is very difficult to define them. We see them, we feel them, but we cannot say in so many words and with any degree of accuracy what they are. Religion is one such thing. Religion is the outcome of man's inner urge for freedom; it is the outer manifestation of his great hunger for the Infinite. Different religions represent different aspects of that struggle, but the whole of mankind consciously or unconsciously is moving towards that goal which is the end of religion. No one is satisfied in life. If he gets one thing, at once he longs for another. He covets a particular situation, thinking that that will give him joy and happiness. But the moment he has got it, he sees the emptiness of it, and wants something else. Thus he goes on eternally dissatisfied,

always unhappy; ceaselessly struggling, for what he himself does not know. That is his life on earth. That is the great characteristic of human existence.

This eternal dissatisfaction indicates that man wants Infinite Freedom. Man wants more and more; he will be content with nothing short of that beyond which there is nothing else to aspire after. That means he wants to reach the Infinite. But man usually seeks the Infinite in the finite world, and as that is impossible he suffers. Those who are experienced and wise easily see the fallacy of seeking the Infinite in the finite world and turn to a direction different from that followed by the ordinary people. That is religion in the true sense of the term. But nevertheless those who are trying to find permanent joy in the material world should not be called irreligious, for are they not also in search of the Infinite? Maybe, they have not found the right direction. But they are

also pursuing the same goal, though unconsciously. This search for the Infinite is in the very constitution of man; it may be conscious or unconscious but it is there. As such it cannot be said that religion can be suppressed, religion is dying, or man is growing irreligious. Those who talk vehemently against religion—we mean orthodox or credal religion—are no less religious. For they see the emptiness of the orthodox churches and religious institutions, and while so-called religious people are too timid to say anything against traditional views, they are sincere and bold enough to speak out openly what they feel or see. It may be that they have not been able to see things deeply and come to right conclusions, but what doubt is there that some of those who talk against religion are strong and sincere enough to be in the vanguard of religion?

The Upanishad says: From Great Joy the world has come into being, through

that Great Joy the world lives, and to that Great Joy the world enters in the long run. From that standpoint no one —not even a confirmed atheist—is out of the ambit of religion. For every one will in the end enter that Great Bliss, and every one is sustained in his very daily existence through that Bliss.

So many may be unconsciously religious, but religion, in its usual sense, means a deliberate and conscious attempt to reach the goal which otherwise one will attain after long, long, waiting. Religion means squeezing many lives into the present one life. A really religious person is impatient of any delay. He wants to reach the goal here and now. Hence he is out of the ordinary—he looks strange and his outlook on life is inexplicable to all but those who are in sympathy with his ideals.

Why is it that man cannot find any lasting joy in this material world and how can he go beyond the confines of

the finite to reach out to the Infinite? It is a fact that man, barring exceptional cases, is not happy; he has not found the clue to lasting happiness. This sounds like pessimism, but it is a fact. In his heart of hearts, every one knows how true it is. In life if our happiness increases in arithmetical progression, our unhappiness multiplies in geometrical progression. There is always some fly in the ointment. There is always something to disturb our peace and happiness. Man has been living in this world for thousands of years, but still the condition of the world is such that no one is safe and secure in his life. A rich man is enjoying all the luxuries of life. He suffers more from surfeit than from want. There comes a war. At any moment he may find himself in the same condition with the poorest of the poor. Modern amenities of life are immense. Science has made and has been making wonderful discoveries to make man's life on earth

happy and comfortable, but with each discovery there has arisen a problem which the world finds it difficult to tackle. So he who does not admit that man is unhappy and miserable is denying hard facts, ignoring stern reality.

In the ultimate analysis what is it that is found to be the cause of man's sufferings? Happiness and unhappiness are but conditions of the mind. It is the mind that makes one feel happy or unhappy. Man identifies himself with his body and mind. As body and mind are both unstable factors, man suffers. The body is all right to-day, to-morrow it goes to pieces. The condition of the mind varies every moment. It is frisky and restive like an unbroken horse. So long as one depends on the mind for one's happiness, one is bound to suffer: This is certain. One must transcend the limitations of the mind, if one wants to get any lasting peace.

It sounds theoretical, if not fantastic,

that one can go beyond the mind. What is the state beyond mind?—it is hard to conceive even! Is it not a state of annihilation—which a man finds beyond the state of body and mind-consciousness? Whatever it may be, there is a state beyond the reach of mind and body. In the whole history of mankind, those who found real and permanent peace, all attained to that state. Ordinary persons may find it hard to understand them, but nevertheless they experienced that superconscious state. That their experiences were true and unchallengeable is proved by the fact that each of these persons wielded a tremendous influence on the life of mankind, and their influence still continues.

Even those persons who have not reached the ultimate goal, but are fairly on the way to it, are found to have attained a certain amount of unalloyed peace. They radiate joy and blessedness, and those who come under their influence

share their experiences. To a sceptical or critical mind this may sound problematical or even incredible, but persons who have come into direct contact with these rare souls, will not question their experiences. For they have found direct evidence. The direct evidence gives you undeniable proofs. We can discuss and speculate about the existence or non-existence of a thing from a distance but when we see that thing before our eyes all our doubts and questionings are set at rest.

One may reasonably say, "Why should we bother ourselves with superconscious, supernatural, or other-worldly things, when we have got so much to do in the living present? Why should we care for unalloyed peace or the 'peace of the grave' for ourselves, when there is so much suffering and misery all around? Let us fight to remove those sufferings, let us struggle with all our energy to bring heaven on earth, instead of flying from

earth to reach heaven." This sounds so logical, reasonable, and heroic! But this method has been tried so long, and the world usually follows it, and what has been the result? The present world is in a chaotic condition, and nobody knows how to bring order from this chaos.

Those who follow the path of religion do so not from any visionary plan, but from an inner urge, which they cannot resist, till some day they reach the final goal and become an example to humanity. Such persons have extremely sensitive minds; they are moved more by dreams and ideals than by the thoughts of any sordid material gains. They can deliberately sacrifice their earthly career at the altar of an ideal and vision. Willingly do they burn their boats, in order to get something which to the worldly-wise has no value. Such have been the poets and scientists, discoverers and explorers—persons who have left their marks on the history of humanity and

lighted up new paths for mankind to march through, but surpassing them all are those who hunger after the Infinite and are content with nothing short of that.

The greatest impulse in a man's life is his love for Freedom, or the longing for the Infinite. At first he is only dimly conscious of it. Impelled by this innate, though unconscious, hankering he goes on and on till the Ideal takes a definite shape or the Goal becomes an object of conscious attempt.

It is interesting to note how this same hankering finds different channels of expression or takes to different paths to reach the ultimate destination. This difference in methods and paths depends on each individual's difference in temperament. One may have very active habits. He likes activity. He loves to serve others. The greatest joy of his life is to help others. Every moment he is ready to sacrifice his own interest for the

sake of others. He loves humanity as a whole. No one is high or low in his eyes, he is ever ready to serve anyone he comes across. As he pursues this path, his tendency to serve others becomes stronger and stronger till his life becomes all sacrifice. He has no interest of his own, and as such his ego-sense becomes nil. And the man who has no ego-sense has the whole world at his feet. We fear the world, we are afraid of unpropitious circumstances, because we have some self-interest to serve and protect. One who has no self-interest has nothing to be afraid of. He has attained Freedom. He has attained Liberation-in-life. In the words of the Hindu scriptures he has reached perfection through Karma Yoga —the path of work. We may not have come across any such person who has reached the highest perfection, but in our daily life we come into contact with many persons whose extraordinary self-sacrifice compels our respect and admiration.

Now if we find a person whose life is an illustration of extraordinary sacrifice, we can imagine cases of higher and higher self-sacrifice till the ideal of complete self-effacement is embodied in some rare soul. So we cannot say that the idea of reaching perfection through work or self-sacrifice is theoretical or hypothetical.

There are some persons who are of a philosophical temperament. They think, ponder, and contemplate so much that hardly do they find any aptitude for action. They find that everything in the world is transitory and evanescent. Everything changes. Nothing earthly or of earth is permanent. And there is that great factor—death. Friends die, relations die. You are afraid to love anyone, for who knows when death will seize him, and then he will permanently disappear from the face of the earth! What is the use of depending for your happiness on things which are not lasting? So the man with a philosophical temperament

rejects everything that is impermanent. He follows the path of what Vedanta says, "Not this, not this." Through this process of rejection he finds out that which is permanent, eternal, and changeless. When he has reached that, he has real Freedom. For he has found that which fire cannot burn, water cannot impair, or even time cannot destroy. Such a man is said to have reached the Goal through the path of knowledge or Jnana Yoga.

There are some persons who are very introspective and self-analytical. They find that all men run after happiness and nobody finds it. Happiness is as elusive as the blowing wind. You cannot bring it within your grasp. So such a man begins to analyse what is the cause of man's happiness or unhappiness in life. When he pursues his research, he finds that it is the mind which is the cause of joy and misery. Outside factors have very little to do with a man's joy or suffering.

It is the way in which a man reacts to external circumstances that gives him joy or misery. So, in order to get real happiness, one should take care of the mind. If one can control the mind, one can control the whole world. For the outer world is nothing but the reflection of one's own mind. If you get control over the whole of the outside world—it can no longer mar your happiness or affect your inner life. Now, how to control one's mind? Experience shows that it can be done through contemplation and meditation. The mind is like a restless monkey. It wanders and wanders. If you want to check it, it revolts and wanders all the more. It is only through deep thinking, contemplation, and meditation that the mind can be controlled and made one-pointed. And the moment the mind becomes one-pointed, you get at the basic foundation of the universe—the secrets of earth and heaven are then revealed to you. When you attain to that knowledge,

you become the master of yourself. You are then above the reach of any earthly influence. You get real Freedom.

There is another aspect of human life which compels one to think of some existence behind the phenomenal world. Man finds that he is helpless against circumstances. Sometimes he fails to work against circumstances. Sometimes all his calculations, resources, and plans avail nothing against circumstances. He feels that there is some unseen hand, as it were, which shapes his destiny. He finds he is not free to do whatever he likes or thinks to accomplish. A Napoleon fails, a Kaiser's pride is humbled, a Hitler is reduced to dust. So human vaunting has no value. There is some unseen power on whose sufferance we exist, live, and work. Beyond its wishes we cannot move a single step. So a man unconsciously, and sometimes in spite of himself, prays to that Power for help, strength, and guidance. Man soon finds that real

happiness lies in identifying himself with the process of action of that great Power and having no separate will of his own. This world is but the outcome of the creative impulse of the Great Artist who is behind His creation, and it is idle for us to hope that we can go against His will. We are given freedom to the extent that it fits in with His creative process. But does that mean that we are eternal slaves, and have no individuality of our own? No, our real individuality is found when we are at one with Him. Therein lies our hope, strength, and joy. The moment we want to see ourselves separate from That, we are knocked down, and we suffer. A pool is separate from the main stream that pursues its joyous course to the sea. But because it is separate, that pool is stagnant, it is dead. Once it is connected with the running stream, it again revives and finds a new life. The moment we give up our individual will we become invulnerable, we become the

inheritors of Great Power, we become adamant, we taste real Freedom. But soon it will be found that the Great Power we speak of is not only outside but within us also. The object we worship externally is within us. The God you pray to is within you. This is called the path of devotion or Bhakti Yoga, according to the Hindu scriptures.

It will be found that all the religions of the world fall into one or other of the groups enumerated above. Religion did not create man, but man created religion. Rather man pursued his inner urge and found out the goal, and the world named the path as religion. So religion is not something extraneous to a man's life, it is part and parcel of his very being. Because there have been many abuses in the name of religion, a man in the modern world gets frightened at the very mention of the word religion, but what doubt is there that every man in his own way is pursuing the path of religion—i.e. trying

to get real Freedom, the Joy that does not wane, the Bliss that transcends all earthly limitations? "The God thou unconsciously worshippest, the same I preach unto thee"—said St. Paul.

Chapter Six

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

In the foregoing chapters we have seen what real religion is. In the light of that conception of religion we can no more live without religion than a plant can live without the sun and air. Religion is the innate, spontaneous urge of each individual towards ultimate freedom. But as each individual is different in temperament from every other, the religion of each man is bound to be different from that of his neighbour. Each man has got his own outlook on life, and each man has his own way of approach to the ultimate goal. But the difficulty arises when we want to drive large groups of people through the same path, labelled as a particular religion. That is what the organizational or proselytizing religions want to do, and as they meet with resistance and opposition, they raise the hue and cry that religion is in danger, religion is

dying, people no longer care for religion. As we have pointed out, religion is the constitutional necessity of a man. It can never die, it can never be stopped. It can never be created, it can never be stifled. The religious feelings and approaches of men have been classified into four broad divisions. All the religions of the world will fall into one or more of these divisions. Philosophically they may differ, their creeds may be different, but the religions of the world fundamentally and basically can be classified into these groups.

People ask, What will be the future of religion? Judging from the way in which the modern man's interest in religion is fading, one doubts whether religion will last long. To us this question does not arise at all. So long as the problems which impelled ancient minds to turn to religion have not ceased to exist, religion also will live. So long as the problems are there, they will inevitably press them-

selves for solutions. Fundamentally human nature is the same always—the same in modern times as it was in ancient days. As in the early days of human history, even now man feels a longing to serve his neighbour; man has to face the problem of death—of his own as well as of his near and dear ones; man suffers from tyranny of mind ; man feels compelled to long for super-mundane help with difficulties which defy any human solution. Rather these problems have now become keener and as such the urgency of their solution is much greater. Nowadays the news of the sufferings of people in a distant corner of the globe is immediately flashed to us over the air. A man in America, if he has a sympathetic heart, is oppressed with sorrow at the news of the famine in China. And can we say that people with sympathetic hearts are altogether absent now? No, definitely no. The world has not become as bad as that. Do we not find

people belonging to exploiting nations raising protests against the very imperialism which secures for them better comfort and luxury? The logical outcome of their successful protests will be, they know, the equal distribution of their privileges with suffering nations. They are ready for that, imbued with a spirit of sacrifice as they are. Even in this world where selfishness, greed, and avarice run rampant, examples of unselfishness and self-sacrifice are not altogether absent. If anyone develops these noble virtues, he is likely to reach the goal of human life. It has been said by a great saint that he who can become perfectly unselfish will realize the Truth.

In the same way, man is as much a victim of the tyranny of mind as he was before—some centuries back. Rather the complexities of modern civilization have made man a much greater sufferer than were his forefathers. Man is now more sensitive, the psychological problems of his

life are much keener—so much so that the percentage of the persons who are driven to insanity is greatly on the increase. For this reason many are intensely eager to tackle these problems. It may be that they will ultimately discover that the whole problem rests on the central factor, the mind, and they will also find out, or even practise the arts of controlling the mind. And if they can perfectly control the mind, they will realize Truth.

Let us look at the same problem from another standpoint. Now that science and knowledge have placed immense power in the hands of man, can he do whatever he likes? Does he not still get knocks from circumstances? Does he not still feel helpless—hopelessly helpless —at times, so much so that he longs for some one, some power on or beyond earth, to help him ? This is not a confession of weakness but the statement of an undeniable fact. When one's beloved relation is on his deathbed, and all

medical or human help fails, one asks oneself, "Is there no power visible or invisible who will come to my help?"

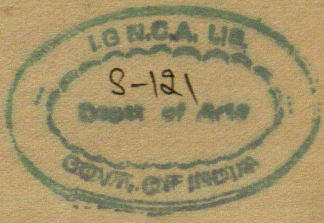
But this is after all, a crude form of religious impulse: namely to seek divine help for mundane things. Only the weak do that. But there are some brave souls who are quite unselfish even in their prayers. They will not pray to God for any particular thing, they will love God for love's sake. They see the magnificence of creation, they see the wondrousness of the universe, they are amazed at the order and system which are behind nature and they are filled with spontaneous love for the Creator. Such a brave soul is moved by an impulse of love and devotion which he himself cannot resist. You may laugh at his sentiment, you may find it difficult to find logic behind his emotional expression, but to him his feelings are genuine. They give him joy, they give him solace and strength, they lift him up beyond the pettiness of sordid

worldliness. A man with æsthetic sense finds joy in the beauty of nature. The beauty of a sunrise or the splendour of a sunset gives him so much joy that he is ready to exchange all worldly possessions for them, though to one who has no finer sensibility this man will seem to be foolish if not mad. Similarly we cannot deny the genuineness of the joy and delight which this seraphic soul enjoys. His love for God or feeling of adoration for the great Creator may seem meaningless to one who temperamentally belongs to a different category or who has not the capacity to appreciate those feelings, but we cannot say that a devotee of God or a believer in the supreme Creator is a victim of self-delusion. For it is very often found that the life of such a man is much better than that of those who glibly criticize him. In the scale of moral values he is head and shoulders above those who think that the phenomenal world is all in all and that there is nothing beyond it.

Fortunately for the world, those who think of life and creation in terms of divine providence and plan, are not altogether absent, though not so abundant. And they will preserve the nectar of life when the earth seems to be well-nigh scorched with gross mercenary ideas.

If one is to give a definite answer to the question what will be the future of religion, one will no doubt be in difficulty. But this much can be said with a degree of certainty that at any period of the life of the world, there will be found persons who will be moved by a higher, if not divine, impulse, and who will keep flying the banner to which humanity is marching. Their methods and ideas may differ from the orthodox views of religion, but these people are much more genuinely religious than any person who passes for a man of God simply because he is rigid in the observance of certain rituals of the church or the temple. At times these men will differ widely from orthodox

people, now and then their actions will be violently criticized; but it is they who will preserve intact the essence of religion, and though they do not belong to any particular Church from them will arise those who will be the founders of Churches. It is difficult to say what shape the future of religion will take. And why should it take any particular shape at all? But it is sure that humanity as a whole will not lose sight of the Goal to which all religions point. "As all rivers coming from different sources flow to the ocean, so all human activities, after all, find culmination in the same Goal."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